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להעביר לשר

מאמר דעה לפרוספקט מגזין - דדליין יום רביעי - טיוטה ראשונה

A stiff-necked people; The State of Israel and national resilience

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There is an ancient maxim from the Babylonian Talmud that reads 'The Land of Israel was acquired through hardships'. The last few weeks in Israel once again attests to the veracity of this statement.

Just as a child cannot choose his/her parents, neither can a nation choose its neighbors; and we live in a tough neighborhood. A neighborhood in which there is no second chance for those who are unable to defend themselves. A neighborhood which is categorized by uncertainty, instability and hostility. For the State of Israel, security – indeed *true* security – must be viewed through a multi-disciplinary lens.

Approximately 15% of our citizens have spent the last decade under the direct threat of artillery rockets and missiles from terror groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In the last round of fighting with Hamas, half of the country was within range of the terrorists' missiles. Without the ingenuity of the Israeli designed

'Iron-Dome' missile interception system (over four hundred interceptions in eight days) – and the continued financial support for additional batteries from the US – the loss, both in terms of human life and property, would have been far greater.

In addition to the threat from Gaza, on our northern border, Hezbollah – a Shia terrorist organization – in Lebanon has amassed an arsenal of approximately 70,000 artillery rockets and missiles. The Sinai Peninsula has become anarchical while the brutal civil war in Syria has trickled over into the Golan Heights recently.

Further afield – but paradoxically still very much on our door step (*see Hezbollah*) – the chief sponsor of terror in the region and aspirational hegemon, Iran, continues to develop its military nuclear program. All the while, we face an incessant threat of jihadist terror from Judea and Samaria.

The myriad threats are dynamic and unpredictable. As a life-loving nation, facing this relentless terror, our institutions of national defense and security must be built on a wider bedrock of national resilience; the *true* strength of a nation.

National resilience; a multi-disciplinary anchor of stability and continuity incorporates international legitimacy, a strong and vibrant economy, social cohesion, solidarity and unity, a sense of purpose, and a common vision regarding the future of the state. These factors must be taken into consideration when formulating operational tactics or recalibrating strategic foci in a new and unpredictable environment; such as today's Middle East.

In the last month, the people of Israel have once again demonstrated exemplary national resilience in abundance. With over 1,500 rockets fired from the Hamas-run Gaza Strip in eight days, Israel's economy remained robust (with only minor fluctuations in the stock market), while the IDF retained the support of the overwhelming majority of the population throughout the operation.

The hordes of international journalists descending on our shores could not help but be impressed by the unity of the nation; a unity which provided a vital base of support for our servicemen to carry out their operations in the most efficient and professional manner.

Once again, the IDF was forced to deal with the most extreme type of asymmetric warfare; fighting an internationally recognized terrorist organization displaying a complete disregard for human life. While the IDF conducted pin-point, intelligence-based precision strikes in order to minimize civilian casualties on both sides, Hamas once again implemented its cynical and cowardly use of civilian human shields on the one hand, and launched barrages of rockets at our civilians on the other. A double war crime.

And we continue to recalibrate our strategic watches. Hamas is enjoying the tailwind of Muslim Brotherhood successes across the region. All the while, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues – openly – to arm and fund the terrorist organizations seeking to destabilize the region. The Iranian regime directly supports Assad's brutal campaign in Syria, while deceiving the world in its pursuit of nuclear weapons. This pursuit must be stopped.

And on this matter, we, our friends and allies think alike, and we mean every word we say. A nuclear Iran threatens the entire world order. It is commonly accepted that a military nuclear Iran is the start of a regional nuclear arms race. Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and maybe the new Egypt will be compelled to join the race. The leaking of nuclear technology to terrorist organizations (Sunni or Shiite) almost becomes an inevitability.

The World leadership – with the United States and President Obama at the fore – is thus in the same mindset: A nuclear Iran is unacceptable.

It is often noted that the Iranian threat represents a *complex* challenge for Israel. However for Israel, this *complex* challenge could become a potentially existential threat in the future. In light of those differences, the US government understands that only the State of Israel itself will make the call regarding the issues vital to our security and our future.

The security and future of the State of Israel, however, also depends on achieving a just and secure peace with the Palestinians. The answer *is* a two-state solution. Two states for two peoples. The demarcation of a border in the land of Israel. A secure State of Israel next to a viable Palestinian State, the expression of the hopes and ambitions of the Palestinian people.

We are currently witnessing a dramatic geopolitical shakeup, one characterized by both uncertainty and instability. It is in times of such unpredictability that it is incumbent on decision makers to lead wherever possible, *shaping* events, as opposed to merely being shaped *by* the events. The challenges before us demand extra alert, vigilance and attentiveness.

The people of Israel are a stiff-necked people. We must be strong and open-eyed; extending one hand out as a perennial feeler for any potential peaceful opportunity. The other hand, however, as is imperative in our tough neighborhood, must remain firmly on the trigger, ready to protect our citizens should the necessity arise.

True Security_ national resilience.doc